Feminist Pedagogy in the Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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I Z J A V A

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Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works provide profound insights into the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and cultural experiences. The author's novels *Americanah, Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Purple Hibiscus* tell the individual stories of unique characters while relating them to the struggles experienced by different people all around the world. As one of the most prominent feminist authors, Adichie presents strong female characters while focusing on the veiled realities of gender politics. The explicit feminist sentiment thus connects her with the anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive views of feminist pedagogy. Following the premises of feminist pedagogy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offers suggestions for overcoming various forms of oppression in *Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* and *We Should All Be Feminists.* Therefore, this thesis discusses the prevailing themes of Adichie's works as valuable guidelines for the exploration of feminist pedagogy.

Keywords: feminist pedagogy, sexism, racism, patriarchal violence, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah, Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus*

Contents

Introduction

From the dawn of history, society has organized the world following the patriarchal structure that privileges men. This venerable structure laid the foundation for a radical change with the aim of equality for all people. Feminism has thus been an immense source of inspiration for various fiction and non-fiction writers. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the authors whose works have been emboldened by diverse issues that emerged from the four waves of feminism. Adichie is a Nigerian writer who has dealt extensively with the issues of sexism, racism, and violence in her novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and *Americanah* (2013). In addition to her works of fiction, the author addresses the subject of global women's rights in a book-length essay *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014) and a manifesto *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017).

Each wave of feminist movement produced respective educational implications that flooded the academic world with feminist pedagogical insights. Feminist pedagogy flourished during the second wave of feminism in the United States while its findings continue to support global educational systems in the battle against oppression to this day. Feminist pedagogues strive to alter the status quo by emphasizing individual empowerment to attain a systemic change. Feminist pedagogy stresses women's experience through anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive teaching (Fisher, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" 20). The same sentiment can be found in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literary works that realistically portray the struggle for equality regardless of gender, race, and class. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the relationship between sexism, racism, and violence as the predominant themes in Adichie's works and the crucial issues raised by feminist pedagogy. These tales of struggle should thus be read not only for the impressions they convey but for the experiences they allow the readers to take part in (Feldner 4223).

The first chapter of the paper briefly examines the history of feminism through the exploration of significant contributions of each wave. The next chapter attempts to define feminist pedagogy by bringing to light some of the most prominent pedagogical authors. The third chapter focuses on the issue of racism connecting it with its portrayal in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, while the fourth chapter deals with sexism and its depiction in the above-mentioned novel and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Finally, the fifth chapter explores patriarchal violence in the forms of (1) domestic violence in *Purple Hibiscus* and (2)

rape in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The chapters concerning racism, sexism, and violence are accompanied by Adichie's suggestions supporting the premises of feminist pedagogy.

1. Feminism

1.1. Definition of the Term

Since the beginning of time, the world has been subject to various alterations caused by the ever-changing social sphere and the battle for dominance. As a result of the rising amount of hostility, people have been facing different versions of oppression regarding their gender, race, class, and other features that make them differ from the "ideal" norm. However, that norm is never ideal, nor should it be formed to represent such an unreachable standard. That is why people all over the world have decided to no longer be complacent, but rather to fight the existing system in which they are mistreated because of the differences they carry. During the formation of these revolutionary thoughts, feminism arose – a movement that gathered people with the cause of reaching the overall equality based on "a rebalancing between women and men of the social, economic, and political power within a given society, on behalf of both sexes in the name of their common humanity, but with respect for their differences" (Offen 151).

The word feminism was coined in France in the 1880s as *féminisme.* The term united "the French word for woman, *femme*, and -isme, which referred to a social movement or political ideology" (Freedman 269-71). People all over the world started to claim themselves as feminists while the movement spread throughout Europe and North America by 1910. Unfortunately, *feminism* have remained a pejorative term from its origins to the present day because society still considers it a dirty word associated with radical action. This is why the term has always been associated with negative connotations of men-hatred and female anger, which are seen as the default of feminism. However, the reality of the movement portrays the opposite picture by fighting the ongoing oppression carried out by the privileged groups. Despite the great number of stumbling blocks, feminism has become an umbrella term for any action of challenging the prevailing gender relations (Freedman 302).

When it comes to defining feminism, it is important to include equality and freedom while stepping away from the superiority of either side. Therefore, if the establishment of balance between the sexes is the central objective, the categorization of feminism must acknowledge the idea of embracing both equality and differences. According to hooks, feminism is "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" as "the enemy within" (*Feminism Is for Everybody* 14), but it can also be defined "as an active desire to change women's position in society" (Delmar 9). Additionally, one can talk about the plural form of

feminism by not restraining it to a single school of thought because it encompasses many different theories and analytical perspectives (Kang et al. 6). The source of power lies in diversity because feminisms cover different sources of gender inequality and provide potential solutions. Even though there is a great number of different definitions, the result remains the same – fighting for "the belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth" (Freedman 332-34). So, the question may not be if people are feminists, but what kind of feminists they actually are (Wood 148).

1.2. The History of Feminism

> "To understand the future of women, we must appreciate the history of feminism that has brought us to this revolutionary moment." (Freedman 433)

Throughout most of the history of humankind, women were denied a plethora of rights granted to the male population. Men dominated the public life while confining women to the domestic sphere, at the same time leaving them out of education, politics, and economy. Such a privileged life of the male part of the population called for a need for change. That change manifested itself in the form of a social movement that sought to provide both women and men with equal rights. However, the above-described change goes beyond the limits of comprehending the differences between the sexes by understanding their intersection with other social hierarchies.

Just like any other revolutionary change in the course of development of the world, the transformation in the way of thinking could not have happened overnight. One of the main difficulties that stood in the way of change was the knowledge gap between the sexes, which was generated through the established education system inclined primarily towards men ever since the Renaissance (Freedman 930). However, the European Enlightenment created a global controversy surrounding female education that included both female and male writers and provoked the first debate about gender equality in the West. Education was becoming "ultimately too important to withhold from women" (Freedman 926-28). After the French Revolution in the eighteenth century, the academic attack on gender inequality bloomed in England, where Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, and Harriet Taylor laid the foundation for education, property, and voting rights for women (Freedman 986-90). Mary Wollstonecraft,

the most prominent author of the time, believed in education for both sexes and insisted on developing skills rather than relying on beauty to survive (Freedman 997). All of these events led to an educational reform that challenged the abiding assumptions about women's intellectual inferiority. Female voices fighting their oppressors were no longer isolated and that represented the basis for the four waves of feminism.

1.2.1. The First Wave of Feminism[1]

The nineteenth century laid the foundation for the expansion of feminism as a worldwide movement. According to Kroløkke and Sørensen, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, first-wave feminism was marked by "the women's rights movement and early socialist feminism" (3). From its beginning, feminism was more of "a Western phenomenon," yet the connection with Europe was crucial for its dispersion (Cova 560).

The women's suffrage movement in the United States emerged during the Seneca Falls Convention. In July 1848, at the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, "three hundred women and men launched a major social movement," demanding equal rights for women (Freedman 443). The Seneca Falls Convention joined them to a much greater revolutionary force that appeared in Europe that same year (Freedman 885). The aim of that momentous convention was "to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women" (Cova 561). The convention presented the Declaration of Sentiments in which Elizabeth Cady Stanton stated that "the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her" (94). According to Freedman, that injustice could only be fixed by providing women and men with equal opportunities (447). Additionally, many other women's rights conventions were organized in the following years to advance the movements of the first wave.

The initial stages of feminism development were characterized by diverse activities that have continued to inspire the following movements. The movement was initially intermixed with other reform movements and included mostly working-class women. According to hooks, there was a considerably high amount of "anti-male sentiment among early feminist activists" who fiercely fought the male domination (*Feminism Is for Everybody* 2). Importantly, the anger

[1] The wave metaphor has been used to describe various feminist activities.

was the catalyst for organizing a women's liberation movement (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 2). As time went by, women realized that they themselves were also responsible for the approval of sexist thinking and behavior. This shift in the way of seeing the world determined the fact that anti-male sentiment no longer formed the consciousness of the movements, but rather "an all-out effort to create gender justice" (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 3). The first step to creating gender equality was the right to vote for women. By the late nineteenth century, feminist activists were mainly focused on gaining their voting rights. That was a highly controversial issue because it raised the question of a potential hindrance for men of color who were also campaigning for their right to vote. It also posed a threat for Southerners who feared that "the thousands of illiterate women of color would also claim their rights" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 4).

Along with the voting rights, the first wave of feminism advocated equal contract and property rights for both sexes. Other attempts to ostracize women only deepened their confidence and determination. The suffragette movement also defied the notion of proper female behavior by engaging in public persuasion, which was perceived as extremely unfeminine. Additionally, suffragists challenged the "cult of domesticity," which prevented women from engaging in public activities (Kroløkke and Sørensen 5). The general belief was that women belonged in the home where they could meet the needs of their husbands and children. So, if women engaged in any public activities, they were displaying manlike traits and ignoring their shared biological flaws of delicate physiques and smaller brains (Kroløkke and Sørensen 5). Therefore, any female activist pursuit presented a sort of defiance to the existing norms. There were two main arguments for the enfranchisement of women. On the one hand, some women's rights activists supported the suffrage movement based on the belief that women would enrich politics with their female concern. The same line of reasoning would also make them better mothers, housewives, and wives. On the other hand, justice posed a feasible argument. Following this argumentation, women and men were seen as equal in all respects; for that reason, "to deny women to vote was to deny them of full citizenship" (Campbell 14). Consequently, "difference first-wave feminism" or "equity feminism" arose, promoting the claim that both sexes should not only be given access to the same positions but also be equally recognized for their competencies and accomplishments.

Feminists of the first wave emphasized the need for establishing a balance between their duties and their rights, which was not very stable since it depended on the country's economic and political condition. Shortly, "the Great Depression of the 1930s, followed by the rise of

totalitarian states and World War II," indicated the end of the first wave of feminism (Cova 561). Women in the United States of America won their voting right in 1920 by "claiming that morally superior women would serve as the mothers of civilization" (Freedman 1260).

1.2.2. The Second Wave of Feminism

Feminist movements were particularly stirred during the politically turbulent 1960s and early 1970s. This period marked the outset of second-wave feminism that "revived in the West, at first under the banner of women's liberation" (Freedman 290). The events that took place during the second wave must be considered in the broader context of "the civil rights movement, the Black Power movement," and the revolutionary tumult caused by the protests against the Vietnam War (Kroløkke and Sørensen 8). The notions of other types of oppression appeared in addition to racism, classicism, and heterosexism, but the focus was finally brought to the interests of the oppressed groups. Women of all ages and circumstances made their voices be heard in debates about discrimination and equality.

The first omen of new feminism was the occurrence of protests against the Miss America Pageants in 1968 and 1969. The pageant was used to expose "the public to an early second-wave feminist agenda" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 8). Women realized that they were victimized by a tyrannical beauty culture dictated by the patriarchy. Marching down the Atlantic City, feminists went to great lengths to highlight women's oppression (Kroløkke and Sørensen 8). To draw attention to the sexual objectification of women, they crowned a sheep Miss America and created a symbolic bonfire in which they burned the "instruments of female torture" such as high heels, cosmetic products, and Playboy magazines. This publicity coup presented a starting point for the worldwide demonstrations against beauty contests (Freedman 3672-681).

In the early phases, the movements of the second wave were characterized by claims for sisterhood and unity represented in the slogans "Woman's struggle is class struggle" and "The personal is political." Therefore, the feminist agenda sought to integrate social and personal struggles (Kroløkke and Sørensen 10). Women's liberation of second-wave feminism championed equality in work and politics, as well as gendered differences within the realms of reproduction and sexuality (Freedman 297). Even though sexuality, birth control, and abortion were the taboo for the majority of first-wave feminists, "these issues became essential feminist demands during the 1960s and 1970s" (Cova 561). At the heart of the movement was a

compelling book by Kate Millett called *Sexual Politics* (1969). The author emphasized the importance of female sexual and reproductive rights and disconnected them from the obligations of women's roles as mothers and wives. Such thinking supported "the criticism of sex roles and the beauty myth," keeping the movement close to liberal feminism, which was concerned with identifying sexism in both private and public life (Freedman 3658). The debate was broadened to denounce gender-based patterns of socialization. These concepts became central in the battle for women's control over their bodies, a "principle grounded in the political theory of individual rights" (Freedman 3657-659). The feminist movement inspired women to no longer perceive their bodies as male property. Women all around the world needed to stand in solidarity to require control of their sexuality and reproductive rights. Additionally, a great effort was undertaken to end rape and sexual harassment. Women also found a way to change job discrimination by lobbying as a group. By identifying and transforming sexist thinking, feminist activists created the mighty sisterhood that would eventually shake up the entire world (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 15).

Second-wave feminism brought an abundance of merits to people all over the globe. Most importantly, it provoked an eruption of research on women's issues, which tremendously influenced the development of a distinct disciplinary field of women's studies. Starting in the 1970s, women's studies provided a framework in which women could be acquainted with feminist theory (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 9). However, not everything was as perfect as it seemed. Like first-wave feminism, the second wave was predominantly defined by educated middle-class white women. Therefore, the movement ignored the growing racial injustices. African-American women were torn between the impacts of both racism and sexism, while white women entered the movement "eliminating race from the picture" (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 56). So, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when women of color introduced race as one of the crucial factors for stopping discrimination, some white women accused them of being traitors for "deflecting focus away from gender" (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 57). The utopian vision of sisterhood promoted by the feminist movement did not embrace the vision of most women of color, at the same time creating harmful barriers between women.

Nevertheless, critical interventions around the issue of race did not dismantle the feminist movement. Quite the contrary, they only made it stronger. In Barbara Smith's view, feminism should represent a struggle to free all women: "women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, Jewish women, lesbians, old women—as well as white,

economically privileged, heterosexual women" (96). On the bright side, destroying the rejection of race helped women confront the reality of the existence of differences on all levels in human life (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 58). Raising the awareness about the intersection of gender and race improved the feminist movement and continued to vanquish the discrepancy between the sexes in the third wave of feminism.

1.2.3. The Third Wave of Feminism

By the late 1980s, most feminist scholars "reflected an awareness of race and class differences" (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 22). The inclusion of the questions of class and race provided the basis for third-wave feminism. The movements bloomed in America under the names such as "lipstick feminism, riot grrl feminism, cybergrrl feminism, transfeminism, or just grrl feminism" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 15). In Europe, it was known as "new feminism" and characterized by activist involvement in the areas of violence against women, "trafficking, body surgery, self-mutilation, and the overall 'pornification' of the media" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 17). The worldwide popularization of the movement showed that it was a new, more spirited, and less pretentious kind of feminism (Kroløkke and Sørensen 15).

Activists of the third wave stood up for more freedom and less sexist thinking. The movement denounced sexist language while appropriating "derogatory terms" and inventing new "self-celebrating words and forms of communication" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 18). Third-wave feminists challenged the heterosexual matrix by destabilizing the distinction between sex and gender (Kroløkke and Sørensen 18). Feminist theory and politics were immensely impacted by globalization and its influence on the diversification of women's perspectives and the collapse of the narratives of oppression. The merits of globalization inspired third-wave feminists to establish a new universal perspective while creating alliances between subordinate movements. Creating bonds with "Black, diasporic, and other" feminisms allowed the third-wave activists to respond to the missteps of the second wave (Freedman 2124). They criticized the existing definitions of femininity that magnified solely the struggles of upper-middle-class white women. Consequently, the third wave examined women's issues on a global scale, demonstrating that gender, race, class, ethnicity, and religion are all crucial components in the feminist debate. Feminism was redefined by creating a more heterogeneous and flexible framework (Freedman 2124-2126).

According to Snyder, the third wave of feminism made three crucial strategic moves as a reaction to a plethora of theoretical complications within the previous wave. First, as a reaction to the breakdown of "the category of women," the third wave emphasized personal accounts that "illustrated an intersectional and multi-perspectival version of feminism" (Snyder 175). Second-wave feminism argued that women share common experiences in a patriarchal society, and can, therefore, produce insights about their oppression. On the contrary, third-wave feminists rejected such a universalist claim, but they did not abandon the concept of experience to provide an insight into the reality of the world's hierarchies. Second, after the rise of postmodernism, the third-wavers embraced ambiguity and action over synthesis and theoretical justification. Respectively, feminists of the third wave did not feel the need to construct ambitious theoretical analyses or justify their standpoint; they just did it. Others could either "join them or do their own thing" (Snyder 188). Finally, responding to the amount of hostility in the sex wars, "third-wave feminism emphasized an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refused to police the boundaries of the feminist political" (Snyder 175). Simply put, third-wave feminism rejected master narratives of unity and replaced them with a "welcoming politics of coalition" (Snyder 176).

According to Lotz, two important groups marked the era of the third wave. The first group is represented by "women-of-color feminists" or "third-world feminists" who adopted the term to define their activist agenda against racial exclusion experienced in the feminist organizations during the second wave. Women realized that the existing feminist theory failed to understand how injustice could be experienced differently for various people, so third-wave feminism included the intersection of various types of oppression in feminist activism (Lotz 4). The second group of third-wave feminist thinking is represented by post-feminism that emphasized the necessity to challenge "oppression caused by identity determinants" that crisscross with gender (Lotz 5). Similarly, it presented a dynamic movement that challenged patriarchal frameworks by giving voice to local and global feminisms. Both groups contributed new ideas to feminist thinking and brought women together by making a better sense of shared problems (Lotz 5).

Third-wave feminism must not be viewed as an erasure of diverse second-wave feminisms but rather as their improvement. The emphasis was thus put on collective action to create a "diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and defined by them for themselves" (Freedman 2125-129). Additionally, third-wave feminists paved the way for the development of feminist theory and politics while emphasizing

conflicting experiences (Kroløkke and Sørensen 16). Many third-wavers encouraged feminist theorists to write clear, fathomable theory, thus making it "more useful and meaningful to women outside of academia" (Snyder 191).

1.2.4. The Fourth Wave of Feminism

The existence of fourth-wave feminism is a source of a great dilemma in the academic world. While some refuse to accept its presence, others are trying to explicate its features. So far, the emergence of the fourth wave has mainly been impacted by young people who associate with it online. By using social media and various discussion boards, young people are walking away from third-wave feminism while self-identifying as members of the fourth wave (Blevins 100).

The fourth wave's principal feature is "its reliance on social media" (Blevins 100). Social movements drastically changed in 1991 when the Internet became available to the wider audience. The transformation of social movements by the World Wide Web provoked the revolution of the feminist movement and brought an end to the era of post-feminism. During the time of post-feminism, the light of feminist movement started to slowly diminish after fulfilling some of its goals, yet the fourth-wavers made use of the various social media platforms to call attention to instances of sexism experienced by women from all levels of social position and achievement (Shiva and Kharazmi 129-30). According to Kaplan, fourth-wave feminism occurred in 2003 "by bringing second and third wave feminists together to confront a new and devastating reality" (55). Therefore, the fourth wave of feminism represents the prolongation of an "affectively intense period of feminist activism" (Chamberlain 12).

The members of the fourth wave shifted the focus to an online "call-out culture," where people revolt against misogyny and sexism by using a variety of strategies (Blevins 101). The establishment of a vocal online platform allowed feminist activists to caption sexual violence against women. The accessibility, low prices, and "user-friendly environment" have strengthened women to speak out about sexual violence directed against them by using social media (Shiva and Kharazami 134). According to Shiva and Kharazami, the advancement of the movement has already brought important discussions about issues like the gender pay gap, cultural sexism, and maternity leave (129). Furthermore, movements of the fourth wave are endeavoring to emphasize the importance of intersectionality and are attempting to remedy the

lapses of previous waves by representing the individuals oppressed by classism, racism, and sexism (Shiva and Kharazmi 129).

Fourth-wave feminism is based on forming communities, instead of returning to structured social movements. Feminists are organizing consciousness-raising groups where they can discuss their individual experiences. Essentially, the reintegration of consciousness-raising groups through various social media platforms is what distinguishes the fourth wave from the third (Blevins 101). Historically speaking, consciousness-raising was a form of activism promoted by feminists during the late 1960s. The consciousness-raising (CR) groups were sites for female conversion to feminist thinking. Women held their sessions in someone's home where they examined sexist thinking and came up with various strategies to overcome it. The consciousness-raising sessions tried to honor every voice by emphasizing the importance of communication and dialogue. Women took turns speaking about their attempts to challenge patriarchal forces in a non-hierarchical model where everyone had a chance to speak (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 8-9). Even though feminist thinking emerged in small isolated groups of individuals, it regained its popularity during the fourth-wave of feminism by engaging in digital activism through social media. In today's world, consciousness-raising groups are making an epic comeback as one of the leading acts of the usage of "technology with regard to feminist activities" (Blevins 105). The technological involvement in postmodern activism allows the broad public to join the movement without paying for education on issues related to women (Shiva and Kharazmi 130). According to Zimmerman, technology presents a distinctive feature of fourth-wave feminism, but its most important enabler is the social media platform Twitter (64). Concerning the aforementioned stance, Zimmerman (2017) further elaborates:

> Twitter is the most important platform for fourth-wave feminist activism chiefly because of its deployment of intersectionality. Identifying privilege, difference, representation, and racism from an intersectional approach is a necessary prerequisite for fourth wavers, demonstrated time after time with hashtags like #solidarityisforwhitewomen, which resonated, angered, and divided many feminists. (64)

Moreover, Wrye believes the fourth-wavers address the questions asked before, but with a twist in thinking from "me" to "we" and elaborating on how feminism can be advantageous to the entire world (186). The fourth-wavers are trying to provide an in-depth response to a growing rate of sexual violence by utilizing technology and creating a call-out culture (Shiva and Kharazmi 133). The Internet-driven wave is set in its primary goal of combating sexual violence by creating an encompassing debate on the normalization of sex by the media. Young

feminists all around the world criticize contemporary culture for portraying a contorted image of women through a unique type of manipulation produced by the fashion, movie, and music industries. Additionally, the wave includes the controversial issues of the porn industry, consent, and sexual misconduct. The fourth wave of feminism is expected to extend the series of oppression by making the voices of victimized women be heard. Women around the globe are speaking out against sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture through the fashionable tool of blogging (Shiva and Kharazmi 140-41).

Even though it represents a relatively recent movement, the fourth wave of feminism has provided the public with the tools for defining strategies and practical techniques for fighting the everlasting oppression. Its existence might be debatable to some, but what is certain is that it perfectly merged with the previous waves making the transition barely noticeable. Most importantly, all waves of feminism are driven by the aspiration to make sure that oppressed groups can construct their own lives. The revolutionary thoughts and acts combined from the four waves have paved the way for feminist pedagogy, which contributed to the omnipresent struggle to make all people equal.

2. Feminist Pedagogy

Pedagogy is "the craft of teaching," which is achieved by using various strategies and techniques to promote learning (Schniedewind 15). Consequently, feminist pedagogy represents a perfect connection between pedagogy and feminist practice. Grounded in feminist theory, it bloomed during the second wave of feminism during the late 1960s in the United States. Ever since then, feminist pedagogy has been discussed among feminist academics in the field of women's studies. The term feminist pedagogy emerged in Berenice Fisher's "What Is Feminist Pedagogy?" published in 1981. The author defined feminist pedagogy as "teaching which is anti-sexist, and anti-hierarchical, and which stresses women's experience" by including consciousness-raising and the power to resist the instances of oppression (Fisher, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" 20). Such teaching relies on resisting the notion of hierarchy, learning through experience, and striving for liberation (Fisher, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" 20). Therefore, the purpose of feminist pedagogy is to put an end to sexism through critical thinking and a vision of a revolutionary social change (Yoshihara, "Feminist Pedagogy in EFL" 159).

With the development of findings in the field of women's studies, feminist scholars broadened the term to *feminist pedagogies*. Throughout history, each feminist movement produced worthy changes in all public systems; *ergo*, the plural form of the term indicates the diversity of feminist movements and their educational implications. Also, the same or similar pedagogical ideas and principles can be found under different names like gender pedagogy, gender and education, norm-critical pedagogy, and women's studies pedagogy, which can be used relatively interchangeably. However, Kumashiro develops a broader framework of anti-oppressive pedagogy that includes feminist, anti-racist, and other radical educational fields (68). Despite the potential clash in terminology, all of the aforementioned pedagogies rest on a range of strategies for challenging and changing the nature and dynamics of oppression. Besides critical thinking, such a revolutionary transformation can only be catalyzed by personal change, participatory learning, open-mindedness, social understanding, and activism (Hoffman and Stake 80). Importantly, the synthesis of the componential parts of feminist pedagogy greatly relied on the substantial works of Berenice M. Fisher, Carolyn M. Shrewsbury, and bell hooks.

2.1. Fisher's Approach to Feminist Pedagogy

According to Fisher, feminist teaching can best be understood by observing what feminist teachers hope to accomplish in their classrooms ("What is Feminist Pedagogy" 20). Feminist teaching can thus be oriented to achieve four objectives of equality, caring, collective resistance, and deconstruction. Importantly, teachers do not need to work towards one goal, but can combine the values that define the aims of teaching. First, feminist teaching for equality rests on the attempt to free students' development from discrimination or any attitude that inhibits female talent and ambition. Liberal education moves away from gender biases while teaching the students to identify and reject gender stereotypes. The strengths of this approach lie in the emphasis on equal treatment and nurturing the female ability. However, this approach hides its weakness in the tendency to minimize the impact of other sources of inequality. Second, feminist pedagogies based on caring are formed as a response to the weaknesses of teaching for equality. Feminist teachers question the individualism presented in the liberal view and pay attention to relationships among individuals. This means that education "should develop the caring capacities of both boys and girls" through a more connected approach (Fisher, "Feminist Pedagogy" 204). Such teaching includes the exploration of injustice based on race, class, and other social sources of differences. Unfortunately, the weakness of this approach lies in the influences of socially structured inequalities that dictate what students and teachers are willing to share with others, so a caring attitude can easily turn into pity for the "less fortunate." Thirdly, Fisher's approach is based on creating collective resistance by paying close attention to the impact of power differences on the relation of students and teachers to matters of gender injustice. Feminist pedagogies of collective resistance were galvanized by social justice movements of the 1960s when activists emphasized consciousness-raising as the discussions about common experiences of oppression. Inspired by such initiatives, many feminist teachers started to integrate various forms of consciousness-raising into their classrooms. In order to build collective resistance, feminist teachers need to pay attention to the types of harm produced by unequal power relations by cultivating trust among the students. Apart from students' experiences, feminist teachers should also use their feelings to develop their critical thinking. Feelings are important because they represent a potential starting point for women to commit to social change (Fisher, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" 21). Lastly, the feminist pedagogy of deconstruction moves beyond the dynamics of exclusion. Such pedagogies offer to teach criticism. According to Fisher, criticism represents the unending process of analyzing any kind of text to reveal how it degrades certain groups of people. In such

classrooms, the experience is no longer the starting point of discussions, but rather a component of deconstruction. Consequently, the insistence on deconstruction leads the education system to succeed in teaching and learning (Fisher, "Feminist Pedagogy" 204-08).

Feminist teachers make their pedagogical choices depending on the context. They are influenced by two important factors. The first is presented by the institutional and social context in which feminist teachers work. Accordingly, such teachers are affected by the combination of conditions in their schools and can integrate different modes of feminist pedagogies depending on the situation. The second important factor is the intellectual and political climate of the global context. When such contexts are taken into account, feminist teachers must think about the benefits of incorporating various theories of feminist pedagogy into practice since it might influence the teaching itself. Despite the instances in which feminist teaching may become deeply problematic, feminist teachers persist in nurturing their students and themselves through different modes of feminist pedagogies.

2.2. Shrewsbury's Approach to Feminist Pedagogy

Carolyn M. Shrewsbury, a prominent feminist pedagogue, builds her arguments based on the principles of Freire's liberatory pedagogy that emphasizes critical thinking and aims for social change. Feminist pedagogy presents a theory about the processes of learning and teaching through which the classroom becomes a liberatory environment (Shrewsbury 8). Shrewsbury further emphasizes that

> [f]eminist pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning – engaged with self in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change (8).

Feminist pedagogy seeks to overcome different versions of oppression while recognizing the impact of gender on all social relations and societal structures. In the liberatory classroom, students become subjects, rather than objects. They learn to respect each other's differences and build on the experiences of others. The vision of such a classroom encourages students to take risks and develop their confidence through participatory processes. These

participatory processes create the students' ability to work with others while developing their skills in critical thinking. Feminist pedagogy works to build a new system where students would think in unconventional ways that strengthen the integrity of the participants and their relations with each other (Shrewsbury 8-9).

Further on, according to Shrewsbury, community, empowerment, and leadership present crucial concepts for providing an overall meaning to feminist pedagogy. They represent the central steps towards the exploration of feminist pedagogy (Shrewsbury 10). The concept of empowerment is an important objective that feminist pedagogy aims to accomplish through empowering strategies. Such strategies allow students to discover the importance of authenticity by finding their voices and letting them be heard in the classroom. To empower all participants, feminist pedagogy uses various classroom techniques that strengthen the students' abilities to accomplish the objectives, develop their independence as learners, and reinforce their self-esteem by expanding the understanding of the subject matter. In the classroom where students are empowered, they all equally matter and have the same responsibilities for each other. Therefore, the formation of an empowered classroom is only possible through the establishment of a community as the second aim of feminist pedagogy. The classroom should represent a community of learners who are interconnected with the notions of autonomy and mutuality with others. The balance between the two notions is adequate for the development requirements of both women and men. Diversity in a community of mutuality creates a notion of collective self-confidence, which enhances the process of learning and creativity. Lastly, feminist pedagogy concentrates on the development of leadership as the third crucial concept. Leadership represents a specific form of empowerment, and it embodies an "active mechanism for achieving the empowered community" (Shrewsbury 14). In the classrooms with strong liberatory leadership, the teacher helps students to develop a sense of shared purpose and provides them with a set of skills to accomplish it. Therefore, the teacher acts as a role model who finds alternative solutions for potential problems in the classroom (Shrewsbury 10-15). Finally, feminist pedagogy does not assume the uniformity of each classroom but rather builds on their diversity. It is transformative in its core and represents a crucial component of a feminist revolution (Shrewsbury 15).

2.3. hook's Approach to Feminist Pedagogy

bell hooks has dedicated an extensive part of her life to the issues of racism and sexism as the main sources of the progressing decay in the educational system. An overall theme of her collection of essays *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) is celebrating education as a practice of emancipation by moving it beyond boundaries of known. In her essays, bell hooks provides various examples of creating the means to escape oppression. There are two important paradigms on which hooks' feminist pedagogy is built. Firstly, the feminist classroom should never be boring, but it should rather present an exciting place in which students' way of thinking is continuously challenged. If somehow boredom prevails, the teacher should use certain pedagogical strategies to disrupt such an atmosphere. Secondly, there should be an absolute appreciation for everyone's presence and contribution. The teacher should recognize the individual influences on the classroom dynamic, which creates resources for education as "a practice of freedom" (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 7-12).

hooks further elaborates on engaged pedagogy that allows the students to take responsibility for their choices while creating a community with their teachers. Therefore, such pedagogy does not forget teachers but rather invites them to share their stories of oppression to overcome them. In the process of sharing, both students and teachers are empowered by being vulnerable and taking risks. The sense of vulnerability allows for immense growth and change. hooks also advocates the change in the educational system by rebelling against monotony and complacency. This rebellion begins with education as a means to restore humanity by building communities of compassion and tolerance (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 20-21). hooks thus claims:

> To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (*Teaching to Transgress* 13).

According to hooks, education is inherently an expression of political activism. There are two possible options in that political act. One is to remain passive in the face of injustice, taking the side of the dominator, whereas the other is to teach students about social justice and take a stand while fighting the oppressor. By establishing a learning community, the teacher provides students with the means of empowerment. Even though it must be frightening, the teachers must surpass the fear of their classrooms becoming uncontrollable with the inclusion

of topics of race, sex, and class because those are the primary biases that "have distorted education so that it is no longer about the practice of freedom" (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 29). hooks emphasizes the fact that emotions and passions do not need to be contained. Instead, the teachers should create a democratic atmosphere in the classroom by valuing everyone's contribution (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 39). Students are encouraged to find their voices in speaking and writing, so hooks suggests journal keeping and confessional narratives as methods for overcoming oppression. On the one hand, in journal keeping, students write paragraphs during class about topics that they find interesting, and then they read them to one another (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 40). On the other hand, in confessional narratives, students share their personal experiences and link them with academic information. When connected with theoretical knowledge, both pedagogical practices enhance the students' critical thinking. They also present exceptional methods to teach students how to listen to one another. So, the teachers must constantly remind their students that it is equally important to speak and listen respectfully to others (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 148-50).

Feminist education that emphasizes critical consciousness in the classroom holds great potential for change in the participants' ways of living outside the classroom (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 194). Accordingly, the development of risk-taking in schools is essential for its expansion in the outside world. The educational systems all around the world need brave individuals who are not afraid to rebel against the "systems of domination" while simultaneously implementing innovative ways of teaching different students (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 10). However, it is as important to stress the significance of works of fiction as of those of personal experience. Works of fiction hold a great potential to change the reality and encourage the readers to find their authentic voices and passion to challenge the sources of oppression.

2.4.The Methods of Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist pedagogy stands as the main pillar of feminist education, a process of conveying feminist content while opposing educational paradigms that accept oppressive social structures. In the course of its development, feminist pedagogy has borrowed many techniques that were not originally promoted as feminist methods. All of these borrowed techniques

embody the basic feminist principles as teaching tools while emphasizing communication, cooperation, democratic group processes, and the creation of change (Schniedewind 15).

According to Schniedewind, feminist pedagogy aims to develop the skills necessary for students to participate in feminist education and to apply feminist insights to their future lives and the feminist movement. Therefore, Schniedewind proposes various instructions that are crucial for the development of such skills. Firstly, to improve the students' communicative skills, the teacher should stress the importance of individualization and constructive feedback. Students are encouraged to own their feelings by saying "I feel" and not to generalize by using "we" or "women." This creates I-message communication that can help women to identify the source of their oppression and take action for social change while feeling compassion for others. For these reasons, feminist teachers should inspire their students to use I-messages in group work and journal writing (Schniedewind 18-19). Second, the spirit of the community must prevail in the feminist classroom, and this can only be achieved by promoting group process skills. Students should work through conflicts by using conflict resolution strategies as a great creative force. Schniedewind suggests role-playing with role reversal as an ideal strategy for resolving conflicts over the course content or classroom interaction. Role reversal implies taking on the role of other people involved in a conflict. Conflicts can also be resolved through cooperation or cooperatively structured learning. Such learning presents an approach in which students are divided into small groups where their participation is necessary for the group's completion of a certain task. In essence, students bear a great responsibility not only for their learning but also for the learning of other group members (Schniedewind 19-24).

A sense of community and cooperation can also be established through several group work activities proposed by Parry. These activities include expanded think-pair-share and group discussions. On the one hand, think-pair-share is known as a very successful technique that confronts students with specific issues. Students think about them individually for a couple of minutes, then form pairs, and exchange ideas for another couple of minutes. Finally, partners join the rest of the class to share their insights. In the expanded version of think-pair-share, students develop their critical thinking skills on the topics that are close to their hearts. The class participates in the discussion about charged topics by following the same pattern as in the original technique. Students are encouraged to think about both the positive and negative sides of an issue, avoiding extreme polarization. This technique also makes them aware of the importance of asking questions and being informed before making any decisions. On the other hand, group discussions are structured by the students' journal entries. In English classes,

students are encouraged to write several concrete observations on a particular text and their responses to the reading. In class, each student reads out their questions or observations, and the class decides on the order in which they want to discuss them. Importantly, students structure the class period around their materials, promoting their self-esteem and independence (Parry 50-51).

In addition to accentuating the spirit of fellowship, it is also important to acknowledge the value of each contribution. As mentioned above, journal writing presents a crucial writing technique used by many feminist teachers. There are many variations of this technique, depending on the nature of the subjects assigned, but most of them rely on reflective writing. Journal entries can be based on personalizing theory, writing about students' social positions, or reflecting on the impact of particular experiences. Parry also proposes imaginary letter and interview writing as the exercises worth mentioning. When writing imaginary letters, students are asked to write letters on controversial topics that are addressed to real or imaginary people. When interview writing, they ask people with different backgrounds about the given topics. By providing a safe space for self-expression, all writing techniques can be used in the students' exploration of the complex connection between gender, race, class, and ethnicity (Parry 47-50).

The balance created between the group and its individuals provides the feminist classroom with the opportunity to extend the area of influence to various extracurricular activities. Feminist teachers should encourage their students to become active outside the classroom by participating in training sessions, conferences, and events supported by various feminist organizations. Students can also work as volunteers and interns in numerous battered women's shelters. Participation in extracurricular activities can develop students' skills for sustenance by teaching them how to build strong feminist networks and form diverse support systems. Therefore, the creation of fieldwork courses brings feminist pedagogy one step closer to the ideal of integrating theory and practice (Schniedewind 25-26).

In contrast to traditional teaching approaches, feminist pedagogues have offered various teaching methods to improve the students' communicative skills and to create a sense of community. According to Yoshihara, these methods range from journal writing, group work, "I-message" communication, and extracurricular activities following the central feminist principles ("The Feminist EFL Classroom" 13). All of the findings in the field of teaching methods have contributed to the advancement of global feminist movements. Practice and scholarly works go hand in hand while cultivating the growth of feminism both in the academic community and society in general (Baiada and Jensen-Moulton 288). Feminist scholars should

make feminist pedagogy their priority because the feminist movement needs educated women and men who “have both a feminist vision of equalitarian personal relations and societal forms and the confidence and skills to make their knowledge and vision functional in the world” (Schniedewind 29). Only such an education can lead to individual and collective transformation, breaking the cycles of racism, sexism, and violence.

3. Racism

"The only race that matters is the human race."

(Adichie, *Americanah* 36)

Bonilla-Silva asserts that racism encompasses "practices and behaviors that produce a racial structure – a network of social relations at social, political, economic, and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races" (1360). According to DiAngelo, it can be perceived as deliberate individual acts of violence against people of color (23). However, nowadays the lack of knowledge about the history of racism makes it easier for people not to identify racism at institutional levels (DiAngelo 256). It also demonstrates that many white people in the United States underestimate the operationalization of racism in society by forgetting histories of racial injustice, which eventually leads to the reduction of racism to an individual level. Consequently, white people can uphold a positive self-image while creating racial structures that influence all areas of life. Racial structures are traditionally associated with slavery and segregation, the major sources of racial inequality. Segregation divided the roles of white and non-white citizens before the 1950s in America. The Civil Rights movement peaked during the period between 1954 and 1968 when racial segregation became illegal and racial interaction in public was lawfully accepted. As a consequence, the racial structures transformed, making racism more covert by focusing on individual acts of violence. DiAngelo argues that the post-Civil Rights racial structures of "new racism" replaced slavery and segregation while maintaining white privilege in the United States. This gradual adaptation of racial structures became so subtle, making "modern norms, policies, and practices result in similar racial outcomes as those in the past, while not appearing to be explicitly racist" (DiAngelo 127).

Feminism stemmed from the antislavery movement in the United States of America. However, American society and its women's movement still managed to divide the world into black and white, despite its founding by antislavery activists (Freedman 1368). Slavery politicized white women guided by their moral authority and religious beliefs. Many white women opposed the existing hierarchy because it separated members of slave families and did not frown upon the rape of female slaves. Such inhumane practices offended their ideals of femininity and inspired them to establish numerous "Female Anti-Slavery societies" during the 1830s (Freedman 1420). However, resistance to slavery did not automatically bring forth a

belief in racial equality. Some antislavery groups accepted only white women, so some free African-American women formed their own societies and engaged in activism to free all slaves, to gain rights for women, and to "end the race barrier within the female antislavery movement" (Freedman 1419-427).

According to Freedman, racial and class divisions deeply complicated feminism and led to questioning the dominant meaning of womanhood. Therefore, womanhood had to be reconceptualized as a perplexing matter by expanding the feminist agenda to reach across social boundaries. Women of color played a great role in building "a politics of coalition across the racial divide" (Freedman 1380). Women of color have made the needs of all women a focal point of each wave of feminist movement. During the first wave of feminism, when white dominance over non-whites was tremendously explicit, African-American women set the stage for shifting the focus to this critique. After the 1960s, women who identified as "Chicana, Native American, or Asian American, as well as lesbian or disabled," required the acknowledgment of the contribution of their experiences to second-wave feminism (Freedman 1393). Consequently, the feminist movement strengthened by building various political coalitions, focusing on the criticism of overall gender inequality and appreciating its affiliation with all movements for social justice (Freedman 1393-1398).

Following in the footsteps of female vulnerability to various forms of assault during slavery, racial stereotypes portrayed all women of color as sexually immoral and accessible to men. In response, the "black women's clubs" attempted to disintegrate an array of myths about race and sexuality (Freedman 1495). By affirming their personal experiences, African-American women exposed the fact that emancipation could not guarantee equality by operating alone; that sexual stereotypes and the myth of female pedestal exerted violent forms of social control; that race-and-gender-based power relations could be challenged by alliance within these hierarchies; and that honorable resistance could present a momentous step towards change (Freedman 1494-546). Nevertheless, feminist pedagogy still puts in great efforts to oppose the "triple-threat" of race, class, and gender that continues to oppress African-American women (Baiada and Jensen-Moulton 289). In pursuance of anti-racist education, feminist pedagogy explores the history and presence of race while imploring students to think about the connection between the structures of power and violence. Students can potentially explore such structures within the realm of works of fiction. The ideal of liberated education can thus only be achieved by bringing feminism into the classroom.

3.1. Racism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

> "Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't black in your country? You're in America now." (Adichie, *Americanah* 3487-489)

Comprised of seven parts, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) starts and ends with a love story that is interwoven with experiences of racial differences and subjectivity. The novel follows Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman who moves to the United States with great expectations but eventually comes back to her homeland with an abundance of pompous pretentiousness about the differences between Nigeria and the West. The main character of the novel migrates to the United States to get college education where she anonymously starts a blog about racial relations she has experienced as an African woman living in the West. The blog, entitled "Raceteenth or Various Observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black," instantaneously becomes popular because of its pieces of advice addressed to "other Non-American Blacks" about how to climb up the ladder in American society (Najmh 274).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reprimands racism in America in a story that is both heartrending and humorous. Ifemelu arrives to America without a concept of race but, eventually, her situation changes due to her experiences of covert and overt racism. Being an African woman puts her in a troublesome position by compelling her to a life on the margins. This is especially evident in Ifemelu's conversation with Blaine's ex-girlfriend Paula: "Isn't it funny how they say 'blacks want Obama' and 'women want Hillary,' but what about black women? When they say 'women,' they automatically mean 'white women,' of course" (Adichie, *Americanah* 5528). Apart from portraying the difficulties African (American) women face in American society, the author also manages to depict the hardships of young non-white men. Ifemelu witnesses the growth of Dike, Aunty Uju's son. His character demonstrates the importance of embracing one's history by overcoming the obstacle of rootlessness and opposing the identities other people project onto him. Despite Aunty Uju's insistence that Dike is not black, he cannot escape the microaggressions fueled by racism that non-white Americans must deal with on an everyday basis. Additionally, the confusion caused by the lack of knowledge

about his roots leads Dike to a suicide attempt. Therefore, "his troubled development" implies the horrible difficulties of raising young African-American men in America (Najmh 274).

The issue of race is also mirrored in the protagonist's romantic relationships. Blaine is one of Ifemelu's boyfriends whose strong principles cause conflicts in their dating relationship. Blaine's character contrasts with Ifemelu's other boyfriend Curt, a handsome and rich white man. During their relationship, the protagonist notices the unpleasant disapproving looks from white women as if they are experiencing "a great tribal loss" (Adichie, *Americanah* 6516). Ifemelu explains that the reason for contempt is not merely the fact that Curt is white, but rather

> the kind of white he was, the untamed golden hair and handsome face, the athlete's body, the sunny charm and the smell, around him, of money. If he were fat, older, poor, plain, eccentric, or dreadlocked, then it would be less remarkable, and the guardians of the tribe would be mollified. And it did not help that although she might be a pretty black girl, she was not the kind of black that they could, with an effort, imagine him with: she was not light-skinned, she was not biracial. (Adichie, *Americanah* 6512-516)

The stability of their relationship is endangered not only by the interference of the outside world but also by Curt's white male privilege that has blurred his vision in identifying racism. Ifemelu notices casual daily racism while Curt allows himself solely to detect flagrant racist behavior, "such as when a spa attendant refuses to wax Ifemelu's curly eyebrows" (Najmh 275). These are the only instances in which he uses his white male privilege to defend her, oblivious that such behavior only reestablishes the rampant racist structures (Najmh 275). Shattered by their differences, Ifemelu and Curt's relationship does not last long "because that real deep romantic love is so rare, and because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved" (Adichie, *Americanah* 6588-589). However, their relationship presents hope that the procreation of "radical love across racial borders might make racism collapse" in on itself (Najmh 275). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie transfers this encouraging belief to the readers by providing concrete methods to overcome the obstacles produced by racial inequality. The greatness of the novel lies in the author's usage of confessional narratives and journal writing as the main methods of feminist pedagogy. In the novel, Ifemelu shares her confessions by writing an anonymous blog and invites the readers to join her in the discussion about their experiences of oppression. In the context of feminist pedagogy, Ifemelu's character serves as a teacher who shares her own stories of maltreatment to motivate her students (the readers) to stand up against the tyrants. According to hooks, journal keeping and confessional narratives present one of the

most effective methods for overcoming injustice (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 20-21). Following Ifemelu's example, feminist pedagogues should thus motivate their students to engage in journal writing in order to reflect on the impact of particular experiences caused by their social positions (Parry 50-51). Adichie's *Americanah,* therefore, represents a guiding star because it resonates with the ideals of compassion and tolerance proving that works of fiction hold the power to encourage individuals all around the world to find their voices and challenge the sources of their hardships.

Racial differences are also brought in connection with the ideal of beauty portrayed in the mass media. Even though racial issues are invisible throughout Ifemelu's childhood in Nigeria, in America the perception of her appearance is largely impacted by the prevailing white-based conception of beauty. Ifemelu critically observes fashion magazines that promote white beauty as the ideal:

> "Let's start with the covers." She spread the magazines on the table, some on top of the others. "Look, all of them are white women. This one is supposed to be Hispanic, we know this because they wrote two Spanish words here, but she looks exactly like this white woman, no difference in her skin tone and hair and features. Now, I'm going to flip through, page by page, and you tell me how many black women you see." (Adichie, *Americanah* 4590-593)

In her conversation with Curt, they find only three non-white women in numerous women's magazines and most of them are racially ambiguous. The protagonist concludes that none of the models are dark-skinned, "[n]ot one of them looks like me, so I can't get clues for makeup from these magazines" (Adichie, *Americanah* 4597). Ifemelu refers to this issue in the post entitled "Why Dark-Skinned Black Women – Both American and Non-American − love Barack Obama," in which she states that "[i]n American pop culture beautiful dark women are invisible" (Adichie, *Americanah* 3924). The protagonist thus despises magazines for being "racially skewed," and condemns the exclusive presence of "small-boned, small-breasted white girls" that overshadows "the rest of the multi-boned, multi-ethnic world of women to emulate" (Adichie, *Americanah* 1404). Despite being a woman who is confident about her appearance, racism manages to weaken Ifemelu's sense of attractiveness with despicable comments and stares. According to Freedman, African women who migrate to the West soon begin to share the Western animosity towards body fat (3643). The female quest for thinness almost inevitably leads to eating problems. The ideal of female beauty creates various health problems and a competitive social hierarchy encouraging rivalry between women. The above-mentioned

hierarchy "privileges the white, thin, and able-bodied," leaving others to struggle with self-esteem (Freedman 3646). The social hierarchy of beauty thus keeps those who differ from the dominant Eurocentric standards of beauty at the margins. Adichie tries to address this problem through the principles of feminist pedagogy by teaching young people that women of all colors, shapes, and sizes are equally beautiful. The author attempts to show that many people in the world do not find solely the "narrow mainstream definition of beauty" attractive (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 303). Ifemelu encounters all the complexities of racially-based beauty assumptions, creating a new, combined way of perceiving her body. Therefore, her story contributes to understanding postcolonial femininity while critically approaching "the misrepresentations and understanding of black femininity in the American culture" (Scarsini 36).

On her way back home, Ifemelu's identity experiences a rebirth devoid of "stereotyped images of black gender" (Scarsini 11). When Ifemelu leaves America, she stops writing about race since it does not influence the individuals in Nigerian society. She speaks to Obinze about her blog, and he asks if she is still writing about race. Ifemelu answers: "No, just about life. Race doesn't really work here. I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black" (Adichie, *Americanah* 6313-314). The protagonist does not identify race as an important part of her everyday life in Nigeria, whereas in the United States she was continuously reminded of her belonging to a racial minority. By being back in Nigeria, race loses its relevance and Ifemelu neglects her awareness of internalized white privilege. Therefore, through confessional narratives and journal writing, Adichie's character invites the reader/the student to see race as an obstacle to success specifically in the American culture. Even though Ifemelu stops writing about race, she stands firm in owning her feelings and expressing them in her everyday life. Throughout the novel, her character grows and changes as she is not afraid of being vulnerable and taking risks. According to hooks, vulnerability and risk-taking present the crucial steps towards education as "a practice of freedom" (*Teaching to Transgress* 12). To reach the ideal of freedom, Parry suggests incorporating group discussions with the emphasis on the students' responses to the reading of a certain text (50). Adichie's *Americanah* thus serves as an excellent foundation for building group discussions and promoting I-message communication (Schniedewind 18-19). In such a pedagogy, boredom never prevails as the feminist teachers challenge the students' way of thinking, leading them to overall empowerment.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* encompasses the experiences of individual characters while including exhaustive criticism of race and racism. The novel serves as a notable reminder that racism is growing stronger each day stretching from covert to overt

instances. Ifemelu argues that “the simplest solution to the problem of race in America” is “romantic love,” not the “kind of safe shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable,” but “real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved” (Adichie, *Americanah* 5379-382). In her manifesto, Adichie claims that the key to overcoming racism lies in teaching young children about inequality and privilege as well as about the importance of respecting everyone with no bad intentions (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 268). Therefore, feminist teachers should make differences ordinary because they are the reality of the world. By making differences ordinary, teachers equip their students with knowledge and skills to survive in a world filled with diversity (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 399-401). So, the solution may not only lie in romantic love but rather all-encompassing compassion and embracement of differences.

4. Sexism

Feminist pedagogy has diligently fought against the societal internalization of sexism since its conception. According to Unger and Unger, sexism is broadly defined as "prejudice and discrimination against women as members of a social category" (141). Accordingly, sexism presents gender-based discrimination that functions to maintain the existing power hierarchy in society by controlling women. It is a product of patriarchy inextricably linked with gender roles and stereotypes. However, it is important to understand the oppressing social forces to make a substantial breakthrough towards a better social order (Becker 26).

Feminism and its pedagogy assume that people are independent individuals who make decisions based on their individual preferences, but the reality is far from such a utopia. In everyday life, sexism denies people their autonomy by pressuring them to fulfill their gender roles regardless of their interests. Discrimination thrives on the systematically internalized differences between women and men, which are translated into advantages for men and disadvantages for women. In that way, men are the ones who are at the top within each class and race, whereas women are left behind. This "systematic disadvantaging of women" creates the perfect conditions for discrimination (Becker 36). Additionally, MacKinnon argues that "the eroticization of women's subordinate status" is the backbone of male supremacy and the birthplace of female inequality (117). The only possible solution to terminate inequality between women and men is to offer them the same choices regardless of their sex and gender (Becker 32-36).

Unger and Unger have broadened the discussion about sexism by tracing its occurrence on cultural, individual, institutional, and social levels (141-68). In a nutshell, individual sexism encompasses negative biases and stereotypes against women that contribute to women's lingering deprivation in the workplace by restricting them to "appropriate" work and life roles. Social sexism involves various negatively-directed interactions between individuals based on their gender. Further on, institutional sexism encompasses a wide range of differential institutional impacts on both women and men. Finally, cultural sexism embodies diverse presumptions about the significance of gender categories and social structures that maintain gender discrimination by supporting patriarchy. Concerning individual sexism, a distinction has also been made between "old-fashioned" sexism and its newer form. On the one hand, old-fashioned sexism entails the affirmation of traditional roles for women and men followed by a multitude of attitudes that surmise female weakness. On the other hand, "neosexism" is

characterized by an all-embracing denial of growing gender-based discrimination in society and all of its institutions while opposing women's political and economic requirements (Tougas et al. 1487). There may be different forms of sexism, but they all arose from the social frameworks of gender polarization, androcentrism, and biological essentialism. Androcentrism defines men as the norm from which women differ. It is closely related to gender polarization that defines gender as two opposite poles of distinct dimensions. Lastly, the most prominent sexist belief is rooted in biological essentialism that defines gender differences based on biology rather than questioning the impact of social forces (Bem 8-11). According to Bem, these assumptions are so deeply entrenched into our culture that thinking in other ways seems bizarre (12). However, feminist pedagogy should keep fighting all forms of sexism starting from the lowest levels and building up towards creating a sexism-free society.

4.1. Sexism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

The issue of sexism prevails in Adichie's novel *Americanah* by manifesting itself through realistically portrayed gender roles and gender-based stereotypes. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* is a novel about Ifemelu, a young and outspoken Nigerian woman, who decides to study in the United States where she unveils layers of racism and sexism. The novel is a mixture of romance, comedy, and drama, following the main character's love story with Obinze, her first love with whom she plans to reunite in America. Obinze lives in London as an illegal immigrant because his application for an American visa is rejected due to the September 11, 2001 attacks. Destiny puts a pause on their relationship by separating them on two distant continents, only to bring them together in the future. The novel also reflects on failed relationships and authenticity while bringing to light the issues of sexism and racism.

Ifemelu's adolescence is portrayed as an active period in which she debunked negative stereotypes related to women. Her personality is perceived as unusual because she does not conform to the stereotypical femininity that silences women. The main character puts an end to this silence by distancing herself from the norms of feminine personality, which poses a threat to her mother: "Why must this girl be a troublemaker? I have been saying it since, that it would be better if she was a boy, behaving like this" (Adichie, *Americanah* 793). Her provocative nature is also perceived as a wicked threat to the societal norms by her peers. Even Obinze's friend Kayode observes that "[s]he is a fine babe but she is too much trouble. She can argue.

She can talk. She never agrees" (Adichie, *Americanah* 918). The cleverness and straightforwardness of the protagonist when quarreling is thus viewed as a troublesome aspect of her personality that deepens the fallacies in the narrow representation of gender. When hearing this, however, Ifemelu feels proud of herself rather than sad because "she had always liked this image of herself as too much trouble, as different and she sometimes thought of it as a carapace that kept her safe" (Adichie, *Americanah* 920). In this way, the protagonist embraces her strong and outspoken unusual personality, perceiving it as a defense mechanism against the troubles of the world.

Throughout the rest of the novel, especially during Ifemelu's adult life, the reader unveils an array of social norms that inhibit the lives of young women, especially women of color in the United States. Shortly after she arrives in America, Ifemelu is introduced to the appropriate ways of behaving for both women and men:

> If you are a woman, please do not speak your mind as you are used to doing in your country. Because in America, strong-minded black women are SCARY. And if you are a man, be hyper-mellow, never get too excited, or somebody will worry that you're about to pull a gun. (Adichie, *Americanah* 3494-495)

Consequently, Ifemelu's explosive nature assumes a further social meaning: the subversion of the norms that shape the stereotyped portrayal of masculinity and femininity. Ifemelu's character, therefore, introduces the reader to "a new, loud femininity" while stepping away from the misleading representations of women as silent, obedient, and submissive (Scarsini 80).

Along with the deceitful characteristics attributed to female personality, the protagonist dissents from the norms of femininity in the way she perceives marriage during her adulthood. Ifemelu fights the social pressure of her mother and friends in Nigeria on the matters of marriage and cooking. Her mother constantly reminds her of the importance of marriage and family life by stressing the passage of time: "Work is good, Ifem. But you should also keep your eyes open. Remember that a woman is like a flower. Our time passes quickly" (Adichie, *Americanah* 4691). Additionally, the misrepresenting importance of marriage is remarkably mirrored in Kosi, Obinze's wife who "had, in the years since they got married, grown an intemperate dislike of single women and an intemperate love of God" (Adichie, *Americanah* 543). She even dislikes her friend from university, Elohor, who rarely visits them because "she's still single," as though implying that single women are less worthy (Adichie, *Americanah* 546). The issue of marriage is closely related to the housewife stereotype. A woman's place is in the kitchen and if she

successfully obtains the role of a good cook, she is "therefore a good wife" (Adichie, *Americanah* 1792). Restricting women to certain gender roles is perfectly depicted in the character of Ifemelu's Aunty Uju. Her role changes from being Ifemelu's mentor to an admonishing figure willing to subdue herself for an idea of comfort. Throughout the novel, she has two relationships with seemingly powerful men. Her first relationship with the General is just a means to maintain prestige in Nigeria, which she achieves by undergoing expensive beauty treatments and valuing his standards over her own. Her pursuit of social status, unfortunately, proves to be fragile when the General dies, so she moves to America to elevate herself to the class of "Big Men and Big Women" (Adichie, *Americanah* 365). When in the United States, she finds Bartholomew and immediately gains a new, suppressed personality by trying to Americanize herself to gain power and acceptance. She chooses the role of a submissive woman by subjugating herself to men who pay all the bills and want her to ask for everything she needs (Adichie, *Americanah* 1176). Therefore, her character's perpetual sublimation opposes Ifemelu's journey of self-honesty to create an authentic identity separated from the society's expectations of femininity and masculinity.

4.2. Sexism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

The subversive portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes also dominates Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The story follows the course of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war from 1967 to 1970, after Nigeria became independent from Great Britain in 1960. The war was marked by ethnic violence fostered by the British and extreme starvation. Consequently, the majority of eastern Nigeria, a land of Igbo people, separated from the rest of the country to create Biafra. The author vividly depicts the wartime experiences of Olanna, Kainene, Odenigbo, and Ugwu. Olanna Ozobia, one of the main characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, rejects her wealthy parents' choice of a husband, decides to work at Nsukka, and marries Odenigbo, a senior professor at the University of Nigeria. According to Ikediugwu, "traditional Igbo parents choose husbands for their daughters" who have no other choice but to abide (3). By refusing to submit herself to the wishes of her parents, Olanna rejects the old patriarchal tendency to subjugate women and embraces the modern perspective on marriage, which grants people the right to choose their partners (Ikediugwu 3). Marriage usually brings about the questions of childbearing, which poses a great problem for Olanna because her husband cheated on her and is expecting a child with another woman due to the interference of his mother.

Olanna thus feels worthless for not being pregnant: “later, in the bathroom, she stood in front of the mirror and savagely squeezed her belly with both hands. The pain reminded her of how useless she was; reminded her that a child nestled now in a stranger’s body instead of in hers” (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 3810). The reader is thus presented with an absurd value system that patriarchal societies inflict on women: their worth is based on their ability and/or willingness to have children. The source of this preposterous idea lies in the idea of marriage and children as an aspiration for women, but not for men. In her feminist manifesto, Adichie explicitly portrays her stand on the matters of marriage and motherhood: women are conditioned to aspire to marriage from their early days whereas boys are taught to strive for success in public life. This creates a dangerous imbalance from the beginning, so “girls will grow up to be women preoccupied with marriage” whereas “boys will grow up to be men who are not preoccupied with marriage” (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 196-99). Accordingly, the author suggests a promising answer to the misrepresentation of marriage and motherhood by never speaking of the two as achievements. Women should never define themselves solely through motherhood and their marital status, but should fully develop their identities apart from gender expectations by including their potential spouses in the process (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 49).

Along with the issues of marriage and childbearing in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the author vividly depicts the absurdity of the gendered division of cooking activities through the character of Ugwu, Odenigbo’s domestic servant. Ugwu possesses the natural talent and soon becomes an excellent cook:

> He had spent many evenings watching his mother cook. He had started the fire for her, or fanned the embers when it started to die out. He had peeled and pounded yams and cassava, blown out the husks in rice, picked out the weevils from beans, peeled onions, and ground peppers. Often, when his mother was sick with the coughing, he wished that he, and not Anulika, would cook. He had never told anyone this, not even Anulika; she had already told him he spent too much time around women cooking, and he might never grow a beard if he kept doing that. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 179-83)

Throughout history, food preparation and cooking have been assigned to women due to their connection with “female gender roles and identity” (Holm et al. 589). Adichie shows this misconception through the character of Odenigbo’s mother who is appalled by Ugwu’s contributions in the kitchen and thus frequently asks: “Does a boy belong in the kitchen?” (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 1617). To deepen the issue, the author juxtaposes Ugwu and his

sister Anulika and, by questioning the patriarchal confinement of women in the kitchen, thus changes "the gendering of food work" (Holm et al. 589). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie exhibits the same opinion in *Dear Ijeawele or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* by stating that "the knowledge of cooking does not come pre-installed in a vagina," but is rather learned (95). Therefore, cooking along with other domestic work should be gender-neutral as a life skill that the members of both genders should ideally possess.

Both *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* bring to light the mixture of gender roles and gender-based stereotypes as the main indicators of systematically well-established sexism. The author provides a potential solution to the entrenched issue of sexism in her *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014). Adichie offers a unique exploration of equality grounded in understanding that the issue with gender is that it dictates how people should be instead of recognizing their true personalities. Sexism camouflages itself in the form of "Feminism Lite" or the ideal of conditional female equality (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 134). The author warns the reader about the analogies Feminism Lite uses to mask the underlying sexism, such as "he is the head and you are the neck" or "he is driving but you are in the front seat" (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 134). It usually hides behind the language of allowing that implies the power of men who are "naturally superior" but should still take good care of women (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 132-145). People should thus always have their eyes wide open to identify the covert versions of gendered stereotypes, and insist on equality because "when there is true equality, resentment does not exist" (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 78). The first step to moving away from gender is focusing on a variety of people's interests. Without the weight of gender expectations, people would be much happier and freer (*We Should All Be Feminists* 190-200). The author completely rejects the idea of gender roles by suggesting the internalization of self-reliance (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 89). Consequently, Adichie inspires the readers by presenting strong and highly capable female characters, such as Aunty Ifeka who instructs Olanna: "You must never behave as if your life belongs to a man. Do you hear me?" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 3714). The same goes for both women and men – people should all see each other as individuals regardless of gender expectations and rather focus on being the best possible versions of themselves (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 3736). Feminist pedagogues should thus put in great efforts to achieve this transformation in the way of thinking by incorporating various methods of feminist pedagogy. According to Shrewsbury, feminist pedagogy should aim to establish liberatory classrooms in which students respect each other's differences and grow through the experiences of others (8). Through the appreciation of diversity, students are

encouraged to discover their authentic voices while building a community with others. Additionally, feminist pedagogues should emphasize the importance of empowerment by creating notions of autonomy and mutuality (Shrewsbury 10). By respecting each other's differences, feminist pedagogy teaches students to identify and reject gender stereotypes while moving away from discrimination and various gender biases (Fisher, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" 20). The key that opens the door to liberal education lies in equal treatment and the development of caring capacities for both girls and boys (Fisher, "Feminist Pedagogy" 204). Education frequently tends to be emotionally charged especially when dealing with various controversial topics, so feminist pedagogues should include students' feelings in order to develop their critical thinking (Fisher, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" 21). Throughout *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie manages to evoke intense feelings and motivate the reader/the student to stand up for change. Consequently, both her novels present the exemplary starting points for the exploration of the deeply entrenched ideas that promote sexist thinking. To put an end to sexism, feminist pedagogues should create safe spaces for self-expression and build their students' communicative skills while insisting on I-message communication (Schniedewind 18-19). Gender differences within a class are likely to cause disagreement, so feminist teachers should opt for role-playing with role reversal for conflict resolution (Schniedewind 19-24). Additionally, feminist pedagogy should aspire to integrate theory and practice through various extracurricular activities. Such activities present a fertile ground for overcoming sexism because they encourage students to be active outside the classroom. Students can, therefore, participate in various training sessions and conferences supported by different feminist organizations, or they can volunteer in battered women's shelters (Schniedewind 25-26). By combining various methods of feminist pedagogy, teachers can equip their students with the tools necessary for identifying and responding to individual acts of sexism. Only feminist activism inside and outside the classroom can combat sexist attitudes and behavior, leading the way towards equality of all people.

5. Patriarchal Violence: Domestic Violence and Rape

Gender has sustained an important position in framing the history of violence. Given human physiological and sociological features, greater bodily strength and male privilege have advantaged men who assault women, thus reinforcing social inequality (Freedman 4747). In a culture that promotes domination, every person is socialized to embrace coercive force as an adequate means of social manipulation. Dominant individuals preserve their power by the threat of abusive punishment whenever the existing hierarchy is threatened. Verbal abuse and other lethal forms of aggression take place regularly behind closed doors (Freedman 5002). Unfortunately, domestic violence against women has long been condoned by the implied right, allowing the husbands to dominate over their wives and children.

According to Freedman, each year until the end of the twentieth century, between ten and twenty percent of "North American women were beaten by men with whom they had intimate relationships" (5016-017). Such devastating results inspired contemporary feminist activists to analyze domestic violence as an issue shared by women beyond racial and ethnic boundaries. Feminist activists all around the globe move beyond family dynamics, emphasizing the "economic problem of female dependency" as a crucial component contributing to domestic violence (Freedman 5031-034). Contemporary feminist movements have tackled the challenges of domestic violence by providing various services and empowering women to fight for their rights. Along with services, feminists insist on adequate police protection and establish "shelters for battered women." The antiviolence movement originated from England and has spread globally after the year of 1970, offering group therapy, child care, legal counseling, and safe houses (Freedman 5041-076).

hooks uses the term patriarchal violence, instead of the softer term domestic violence, to remind the reader that violence within the family is connected to sexist thinking that promotes male dominance. Patriarchal violence encompasses coercive acts both in the home and outside. It is based on the belief that it is justifiable for a more powerful individual to control others through different forms of coercive force. This broadened "definition of violence includes male violence against women, same-sex violence, and adult violence against children" (hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* 62). Most people ignorantly tend to separate domestic violence between adults from violence against children, but the reality is far from this naive assumption. Unfortunately, children often suffer abuse as they try to protect their mothers who are being

attacked by their male companions, or as they constantly witness various acts of violence, which slowly crush their spirits (hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody* 62).

Rape is the further expression of power and authority of men over women, which is deeply influenced by class and race. Consequently, the acts of sexual violence are more frequently perpetrated by privileged white males who are granted "immunity from prosecution" (Freedman 4830). Kivai further elaborates:

> It is a form of violence and most of the perpetrators of the crime are men. Men desire to rape women in order to assert their authority over them. Rape can even be a symptom of inequality and the desire on the part of those who wield power to assert it on the powerless. It is an action rooted in masculine behavior that serves to perpetuate patriarchal order. (87)

Attempts to control female sexuality have created an unstable setting for the disclosure of sexual violence. According to Freedman, smaller bodies in childhood, assuming female gender or sexual identities, and not asserting male privilege are the factors that make men vulnerable to gender-related violence (4747-752). All of these insights encouraged early feminists to recognize rape as the "criminal use of male power against women" (Freedman 4803). Once the women's rights movement unveiled the issue of abusive marital companions during the second wave of feminism, activists broadened the critique of violence by campaigning to break the cycle of rape. During that period, feminist activists coined the terms "marital rape," "date rape," "sexual harassment," and "domestic violence" to include both assaults by strangers and those committed by colleagues and spouses (Freedman 4757-760).

Feminists utilized their mass impact to start "the antiviolence movement," which insists on "women's right to control their bodies" by opposing sexual and physical abuse (Freedman 4762). The movement also espouses children's right to a life without violence by criminalizing all acts of violence and protecting women and children from maltreatment (Freedman 4762-763). Feminist activists of the antiviolence movement reject female helplessness and the need for protection by renaming women as rape "survivors" who pass on their tales of rape so that others might escape it (Freedman 4871-873). Therefore, the movement offers a variety of services to empower survivors of violence by defying gendered stereotypes of female passivity, encouraging women to fight back by using self-defense techniques. The feminist "anti-rape movement" has also invited men to become their allies by emphasizing the importance of consent and refusal to participate in gender objectification. In response, men have established

their antiviolence projects supporting survivors and changing coercive behaviors (Freedman 4896).

Throughout the world, women are adamantly refusing forced sex and cruelty by creating alternative visions of power and justice. Only by seeking racial, social, and gender justice can feminism shatter the existing hierarchy and undermine all forms of patriarchal violence (Freedman 5878). Yet, to reconstitute the world with no tolerance for violence, this hierarchy of dominance must firstly be destroyed in familial surroundings by teaching the parents how to nurture their children in nonviolent ways.

5.1. Domestic Violence in *Purple Hibiscus*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie entered the literary world with the novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) – a compelling masterpiece that revolves around Kambili Achike's experiences of domestic violence, religious oppression, and sexual awakening. The story takes place in Enugu during an incipient military coup in Nigeria. The main character, a young girl Kambili, lives with her older brother Jaja. Both characters are in their teenage years and excel at school but are restrained and morose. Their father Eugene is a rigid disciplinarian whose strict devotion to Catholicism casts a dark shadow over his paternal love. He punishes his wife Beatrice and his children when they fail to satisfy his fatally high requirements. Achike's familial atmosphere is contrasted with Aunty Ifeoma's family who ultimately helps Kambili and Jaja find their voices and independence.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, patriarchal violence reveals itself in the form of domestic violence. According to Nutsukpo, domestic violence takes place when a partner deliberately causes physical or mental harm to other family members (119). In the novel, Eugene Achike presents himself as a devout Catholic to the outside world but proves to be abusive behind closed doors of his home. He inflicts physical and psychological pain on his wife, children, and father. The story begins with a violent scene when Jaja refuses to go to communion, which fuels Eugene's indignation and results in the symbolic destruction of the ballet figurines. After his tantrum, Eugene calmly invites his family to join him for a cup of tea, completely ignoring the fragile condition of his children:

> I waited for him to ask Jaja and me to take a sip, as he always did. A love sip, he called it, because you shared the little things you loved with the people you loved. Have a love

> sip, he would say, and Jaja would go first. Then I would hold the cup with both hands and raise it to my lips. One sip. The tea was always too hot, always burned my tongue, and if lunch was something peppery, my raw tongue suffered. But it didn't matter, because I knew that when the tea burned my tongue, it burned Papa's love into me. (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 144-51)

Spiritual suffering represents one of the most perilous effects of child abuse, leaving the victims vulnerable to other hardships inflicted by the outside world (Nutsukpo 121). This incident thus marks the starting point of Jaja's insurgency against his father and religion, which additionally inflames Eugene's violence, making him spiral inside his "Jekyll and Hyde" personality.

Both Jaja and Kambili witness their father's abusive side from their early childhood when he would ask them to get the beating rod. Kambili testifies that they "always chose whistling pine because the branches were malleable, not as painful as the stiffer branches from the gmelina or the avocado" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 2272). This tradition of battery proves that not even the young children can escape violence. Despite the web of abuse, Kambili and Jaja still try to rise to their father's standards, but when they fail and walk right into sin Eugene punishes them with boiling water.

> He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen. He was crying now, tears streaming down his face. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet... And then I screamed.
> "That is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet," he said. (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 2287-289)

Eugene rejects his father, Papa Nnukwu, for traditionally praising his God Chi. Additionally, Eugene denies him the right to see his grandchildren and refuses to help him because of his heathenish ways. So, Papa Nnukwu lives in a poverty-stricken house, eats meatless food, and wears old clothes. Because he worships African Indigenous Religions, Eugene's children are only allowed to see him for 15 minutes under rigorous rules with no food or drinks at his household. Jaja and Kambili are consequently severely punished for sleeping in the same house with their grandfather Nnukwu during their visit to Aunty Ifeoma. Eugene rationalizes his violent behavior by referring to the African belief system as "the realm of evil," insisting that everybody should unconditionally follow only his "moral" compass (Dube 230).

Apart from his religious beliefs, Eugene justifies his domestic violence on the premises of female subjugation that encourages prejudices against women and normalizes violent behaviors. Such thinking is supported by leaving women out of the bigger picture since they do not count as human beings (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 940). Along with her children, Mama Beatrice is also silenced by Papa's imposed religiosity. She has devoted her life to motherhood as the only source of happiness in her life. Her husband, on the other hand, is the source of her physical and emotional agony. Despite this, her faith and financial security compel her to stoically endure his brutalities. She experiences two miscarriages due to Eugene's inhumanity:

> We stood and watched Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder . . . we cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone carried a leaking jar of red watercolor all the way downstairs. Jaja scrubbed while I wiped. (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 594-95)

After her husband batters her to a state of miscarriage, Beatrice only gathers enough courage to leave very briefly, but soon she returns home ignoring the dangers, "while her scarred children become the silent witnesses and victims of his extreme violence" (Dube 234). However, towards the end of the novel, Kambili, Jaja, and Mama start to catch the breaths of freedom symbolized in the purple hibiscus growing in their garden (Dube 234). Beatrice decides to stop violence in their house by poisoning her husband with the assistance of their housemaid Sisi. Jaja claims the responsibility for the crime and goes to prison. Three years later, Kambili and her mother visit him in prison to inform him about his release. After the visit, Kambili finally feels optimistic about the future.

Throughout the novel, the author highlights parenthood as the most important aspect of family life, bringing to focus the lasting influence of parental decisions on the development of children. If children grow up tangled in the web of abuse, they are most likely to project such behavior in their future relationships. Consequently, Adichie refers to the notion of gender-based violence in her manifesto suggesting that it can be avoided by teaching children to question "men who have empathy for women only if they see them as relational rather than as individual equal humans" (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 188). Feminist pedagogy should, therefore, make immense efforts to instill the idea that women are not a special species that needs to be championed and venerated. There is a condescending undertone to the idea that women need to be saved solely because they are women. The author connects the idea with chivalry and its ill-founded presumption of female fragility. However, such condescending thinking can only be

dismantled by treating women as equal human beings worthy of love and respect (Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 192).

5.2. Rape in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a ruthless account of love and violence surrounded by the monstrosities of the Biafran war. The course of the war breaks the romantic notion of love, altering it to sexual violence used to manipulate and suppress women. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie allows for the coexistence of fiction and history by graphically portraying violence and the pain of war while at the same time emphasizing the irrelevance of humanity amid these circumstances. According to Zanou Capo-Chichi and Bodjrènou, Adichie uses rape as a metaphor, emphasizing the victimization of women during times of conflict. Therefore, rape is interpreted as a weapon men use to antagonize women and represents one of the most insidious forms of social brutality because it unceasingly reminds women of their vulnerable condition (Zanou Capo-Chichi and Bodjrènou 153).

In the context of warfare, rape becomes a compelling symbol of female vulnerability as "their bodies become the canvas upon which struggles over the meaning of the nation are enacted" (Krishnan 72). Men enforce terror subjecting women to sexual torture and restricting them to a vulnerable position. This can be read in Anulika's rape by the federal forces: "They forced themselves on her. Five of them…. They nearly beat her to death" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 7157). Other episodes of female victimization also reflect the Nigerian army's oppressive machinery desecrating the bodies of Biafran women: "They raped pregnant women before they cut them up" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 3247). Adichie deepens the sense of disturbance through the usage of radio as a powerful means for broadcasting instances of physical violation. In this regard, Special Julius' unsettling depiction of rape strikes the reader and brings to light the horrors experienced by the forgotten victims: "And they choose the best houses and force people's wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 4845).

The notion of endangered femininity resonates throughout the novel focusing on the alternation of Ugwu's character. Before the Biafran war, Ugwu is described as a brilliant houseboy who initially marvels at all his occupations but is frustrated by love due to his amorous nature. However, with the beginning of the war, Ugwu is conscripted into the army

against his will and almost killed. During his time in the army, he murders enemy soldiers and participates in gang rape of a nameless woman. The soldiers use rape to oppress women expressing their power and victory:

> When he finally went back inside, he stopped at the door. The girl was lying on her back on the floor, her wrapper bunched up at her waist, her shoulders held down by a soldier, her legs wide, wide ajar. She was sobbing, "Please, please, *biko*." Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-Tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker-colored than his legs. The soldiers were cheering. "High-Tech, enough! Discharge and retire! . . . The food is still fresh! Target Destroyer, aren't you a man?" *I bukwa nwoke.* On the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 6065-6067)

Ugwu's participation in the rape of a bar girl serves as his most agonizing confrontation within the novel and represents an act he deeply regrets. Dreams of the rape haunt him at nights, replacing the vision of the bar girl with his love interest Eberechi, so he wakes up "hating the image and hating himself" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 8449).

The female figure and her violation are subsumed in Olanna's character, suffering because of her beauty. Olanna is often an object of the depersonalizing male gaze because of her appearance, and that is perfectly evident in her relationship with Chief Okonji, a friend of her parents. He claims a romantic interest in Olanna, but Olanna explicitly reprimands his amorous offers. Despite her refusal,

> [h]e pulled her to him, and for a while Olanna did nothing, her body limp against his. She was used to this, being grabbed by men who walked around in a cloud of cologne-drenched entitlement, with the presumption that, because they were powerful and found her beautiful, they belonged together. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 524)

The above-mentioned scene shows the imposed female vulnerability, restraining women to the objects of uncontrollable male desire. The female objectification is further depicted in the instance of stoning: "Later, two village women came and were taken into the commander's quarters; much later, the soldiers threw stones at them as they left" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 6077). Male domination goes so far that it subjects women to become a means of reaching a "self-loathing release" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 6067). The author thus points to the uncontrollable male nature inscribing its rage onto the female body.

Additionally, the narrator examines rape as a form of women's oppression by religious male individuals. According to Zanou Capo-Chichi and Bodjrènou, in the novel priests conceal their masculine lust while shamelessly using their privileged position to sexually abuse Biafran women (154-55): Father Marcel thus takes advantage of many young girls during the war. Once, Kainene observes that "he fucks most of them before he gives them the crayfish" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 6766). Father Marcel often commits this crime in the presence of his colleague Father Jude whose silence reveals the existing conspiracy among religious men and their apathy towards women. Adichie's account of gruesome sexual abuse thus argues that religion contributes to overall women's oppression.

One of the main objectives of feminist pedagogy is to eradicate violence and the principal causes of violence against women. According to Martin et al., young girls experience various forms of sexual violence ranging from "unwanted sexual advancements, sexual rumors and gossip to unwanted touching" (552). However, most girls are still unwilling to report their sexual harassers because they usually do not want to cause problems to their "friends" (Martin et al. 552). Instead, when victims of sexual harassment, many adolescent girls turn to their peers for support while keeping away from professional help (Martin et al. 1245). To change this tendency, feminist pedagogues must do everything in their power to create a safe space for survivors of sexual violence. The antiviolence movement and feminist pedagogy insist on woman's right to be in control of her body while showing "resistance to forced sex and physical abuse" (Freedman 4757-4760). Since rape is an extremely controversial topic, Adichie's novel can potentially serve as the basis for group discussions and journal writing. Feminist teachers can also motivate their students to write imaginary letters on the topic to real or imaginary people (Parry 52). In this way, they can challenge their students' way of thinking and provoke feelings of vulnerability and compassion that are necessary for social change. Additionally, young girls should be encouraged to challenge the stereotypes of female inferiority through self-defense (Freedman 4883-4885). Through this physical approach, feminist pedagogues motivate women to take control of their bodies and use their strength to protect themselves. However, the main source for preventing rape lies in teaching boys the importance of consent as well as refusing to objectify women (Freedman 4986). To raise awareness about the all-encompassing issue of violence against women, feminist teachers and pedagogues should invite representatives from various organizations to speak to the students about dating and sexual assault (Martin et al. 1949).

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* does not leave anybody immune to the chilling effects of violence produced by the atrocities of war conflict. It provides the reader with a realistic portrayal of female subjection to various forms of violence, both during war-time and the time of peace. Women have been objects of male gaze since the beginning of time – a fact that has been deeply supported by teaching young girls to be likable and false. To the contrary, the society does not teach boys the same but rather locks them in the cage of stiffness. Adichie argues that many sexual predators have taken advantage of this since many young women remain silent after facing diverse forms of abuse (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 241). Our culture has internalized the teaching of shame attached to female sexuality, which is purely based on male control. From childhood, young girls are taught to cover themselves, as if by being born female, they are predestined for a constant feeling of guilt (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminist* 185). Women must cover themselves up to protect men, thus supporting the dehumanizing notion of reducing women "to mere props used to manage the appetites of men" (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 354). By suggesting the destruction of the connection between sexuality, nakedness, and shame, Adichie advises the reader to teach girls to renounce the association of female biology with shame while emphasizing the importance of honesty rather than likeability (Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* 365). Therefore, feminist pedagogy must teach both girls and boys to be honest, brave, and kind. Pedagogues should encourage young girls to speak their minds taking a stand that is sometimes difficult or unpopular. Most importantly, our society should aspire to raise young people who are praised for being kind to others so they never take anyone's kindness for granted *(*Adichie, *Dear Ijeawele* 245). Only in a world filled with kind people it will be possible to reach the ideal of equal humanity.

Conclusion

Feminist pedagogy represents an intangible link between pedagogical and feminist practice. In the same way, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works succeed in achieving a perfect balance between the narratives of racism, sexism, and violence as the central themes of feminist pedagogy. Feminism and its pedagogy should thus come together to create unity in a peaceful, just, and humane world.

Following the examples of good practice proposed by Berenice M. Fisher, Carolyn M. Shrewsbury, and bell hooks, feminist teachers should develop caring capacities for both girls and boys. They should encourage their students by exploring injustices based on race, class, gender, and other social structures. Feminist education should also rely on consciousness-raising to build collective resistance led by strong, autonomous individuals. Consequently, the path to empowerment must be paved with attempts to develop students' critical thinking. In this sense, feminist pedagogues should encourage young girls and boys to take risks in speaking up about the instances of oppression they have experienced. This atmosphere can create a sense of vulnerability, but ultimately it will only lead to growth. Additionally, teachers should put maximum effort into establishing learning and teaching communities while building students' confidence and self-esteem. Feminist classrooms should therefore never be boring but should present safe spaces for self-expression. To avoid monotony and disinterest, teachers can use various methods promoted by feminist pedagogy. When methods like journal keeping and confessional narratives are supported with theoretical background, they provide students with the knowledge to overcome different forms of oppression. In addition to personal experience, feminist teachers should emphasize the importance of works of fiction as they have the potential to change reality. Therefore, Adichie's stories of struggle can inspire students to find their authentic voices and stand up against injustice.

Feminist pedagogy is a fundamental constituent of a feminist revolution that will never fade. Its power can only be strengthened by developing students' love for books because they can help them understand and question the world. More specifically, the greatness of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works lies in the realistic depiction of everyday struggles experienced by people from different backgrounds. This makes her stories relevant and inspiring for individuals who are facing similar difficulties. This is why such powerful literary works, when combined with feminist pedagogy, have the power to surpass the never-ending hardships in the quest for equality.

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